(b) the specific reasons for increasing deficit trade of the country during the last three years; and

(c) the concrete steps being taken by Government to improve the balance of payment and decrease import of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) Sir, Trade deficit is measured by excess of imports over exports. As this reflects in the overall Balance of payment position, the key to reducing the trade deficit lies in export promotion. During the last three years, India's exports in US $ terms have, as per DGCI&S data, registered a sustained increase of 18 to 20%. However, imports have also increased, as per the requirements of the economy, which as resulted in trade deficit of US$ 1069 million in 1993-94, US$ 2324 million in 1994-95 and US $ 4881 million in 1995-96. During April-December 1996-97 the trade deficit at US $ 3248 million is lower as compared to the trade deficit of US $ 3535 million during the corresponding period in 1995-96.

Export Promotion measures are continuously being taken by the Government, through changes in polices & procedures for an export friendly environment, involvement of States in export promotion and in consultation with Trade and Industry.

Target Fixed for Exports

168. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the target fixed for rate of growth of exports during 1996-97;

(b) the actual rate of growth of exports during April—November, 1996 as compared to the corresponding period of last year; and

(c) the steps being taken to reverse the downslide in exports and the rate of export growth likely to be achieved during the current financial year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) and (b) At the beginning of 1996-97 export growth of 18% to 20% in US dollar terms was envisaged over the previous year. As per DGCI&S data, export growth (in dollar terms) during April—November, 1996, is placed at 8.05% as compared to April—November, 1995.

(c) Export performance is influenced *inter alia* by international market conditions, infrastructure and policy framework. Export promotion measures are continuously being taken by Government through changes in policies and procedures for providing an export friendly environment, involvement of States in export promotion and consultation with Trade and Industry.

Having regard to the performance during the year, export growth would be lower than was initially envisaged at the beginning of the year.

Steep Hike in the Prices of Wheat released to Open Market by FCI

169. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether a hefty hike in the prices of wheat released to the open market by Food Corporation of India has been proposed and similar hike in the prices of food items distributed through PDS Network is being effected;

(b) if so, the details of decision taken/ under consideration and implications/ justification thereof;

(c) the extent of shortage of foodgrains in the country and quantities proposed to be imported for consideration of food safety net through buffer stocks; and

(d) the details of import deals already finalised?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) and (b) The

open sale of wheat and rice is undertaken, *inter alia*, to exert a sobering influence on the market prices without jeopardising the Public Distribution System. Keeping in view the wide gap in the market prices *vis-a-vis* open sale prices notified by the Government; to neutralise the freight element paid by FCI in moving wheat from procuring areas to consuming areas; to reduce the subsidy burden on open sale, and to discourage the traders to make undue profit; the Government decided to increase the open sale prices of wheat with effect from 4.2.97. List of Centre-wise prices is annexed as statement (*See* below). The Central Issue prices of wheat and rice for PDS were last revised with effect from 1.2.94. No decsion has been taken yet to increase the CIP of PDS.

(c) The production of rice came down from 81.16 million tonnes in 1994-95 to 79.45 million tonnes in 1995-96. Similarly, the production of wheat has also come down from 65.77 million tonnes in 1994-95 to 62.62 million tonnes in 1996-97. While procurement of rice during 1996-97 has been a little higher than that of the previous year, the procurement of wheat has been 4.1 million tonnes lower than that of the previous year. Therefore, Government decided to import upto 2.00 million tonnes of wheat during 1996-97 to augment availability in the country with a view to controlling the open market prices.

(d) The State Trading Corporation of India have already contracted for import of wheat upto 16.75 lakh tonnes as per details given below:—

Country	Contracted Qty. (in lakh tonnes)	Price (US $ per tonnes)
Australia	10.00	148 FOB
	3.25	156 FOB
Canada	2.50	152.50 FOB
Argentina	1.00	173 (C & F)
	16.75	

Statement

Open Sale Prices of Wheat at various Centres effective from 4.2.1997.

Sl. No.	Name of the Major Centre	Rate Rs./ per MT
1.	Guwahati	7500
2.	Mumbai	7400
3.	Nagpur	7400
4.	Indore	7200
5.	Gwalior	6000
6.	Raipur	7400
7.	Ahmedabad	7300
8.	Surat	7300
9.	Cuttack	7400
10.	Bhubaneshwar	7400
11.	Patna	6500
12.	Ranchi	7000
13.	Calcutta	7400
14.	Siliguri	7400
15.	Delhi	5000
16.	Chandigarh	4900
17.	Lucknow	5400
18.	Kanpur	5400
19.	Varanasi	6000
20.	Bareilly	5000
21.	Madras	7800
22.	Coimbatore	7800
23.	Madurai	7800
24.	Cochin	7900
25.	Trivandrum	7900
26.	Hyderabad	7500
27.	Vishakapatnam	7500
28.	Bangalore	7700
29.	Mysore	7700
30.	Belgaum	7700
31.	Jaipur	5200
32.	Shimla	5031
33.	Jammu	5200
34.	Srinagar	5300

In case of open sale at Depots at other centres, the rate fixed for nearest major centre shall apply.

बिहार में चीनी उद्योगों/मिलों की स्थापना

170. **श्री रामगोपाल यादव:** क्या खाद्य मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार वित्तीय वर्ष 1997-98 में बिहार में चीनी उद्योगों/मिलों की स्थापना करने पर विचार कर